

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

CHILDREN PLACED IN
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES
AND
NON-RELATIVE FOSTER FAMILY HOMES

June 30, 2000

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Gray Davis, Governor

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
Grantland Johnson, Secretary

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Rita Saenz, Director

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

CHILDREN PLACED IN

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES

AND

NON-RELATIVE FOSTER FAMILY HOMES

This report has been prepared pursuant to Senate Bill 160 (Chapter 50, Statutes of 1999), authored by Senator Peace.

Senate Bill 160 requires the California Department of Social Services to collect and analyze demographics and policies regarding foster family agency and non-relative foster family home placements and to report to the Legislature by June 30, 2000, with recommendations for further study to determine how foster family agency and non-relative foster family home placements are and should be utilized.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report to the California Legislature from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) as required by Senate Bill (SB) 160 (Chapter 50, Statutes of 1999). SB 160 requires CDSS conduct two phases of study regarding foster family agencies (FFAs) and non-relative foster family homes (FFHs). The first phase entails collection and analysis of data for compilation in a report to the Legislature. The report is to provide the Legislature with information and recommendations regarding the placement of foster care children in FFAs and non-relative FFH. The second phase of the study will be to assess how placement in FFAs and FFHs are and should be utilized to meet the needs of children and families in the future.

This report is the product of the first phase of the study as specified in the bill. This phase included the collection and analysis of data concerning statewide and county-specific utilization patterns and historic trends; rates of payment; comparative data on county placement policies, child demographics and placement characteristics; and, the number of certified beds and children in each placement type.

The need for this report was precipitated, in part, by a perceived lack of distinction between FFAs and FFHs although these two placement options were developed with some distinct differences to serve a variety of children with varying needs. Originally, FFAs were developed as an alternative placement to group homes, but as time has passed FFAs have become an alternative placement to FFHs. Over the years, the number of children placed by counties in FFAs has dramatically increased, while placements in FFHs have remained somewhat stable.

This report is limited to those children who have been placed by county child welfare services (CWS) agencies and probation departments (PD) in either a FFA or a non-relative FFH. Also included is a small number of children who receive care through the Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC) program and who reside in a FFA.

For the most part, the data and information presented in this report is not surprising to those who are familiar with the foster care system. The data regarding the characteristics of children in FFAs and FFHs indicate that the numbers of children counties placed with FFAs and in FFHs were about equal in 1999, at approximately 32,000 children in each placement type. Age, gender and ethnicity data were largely similar between the two placement types. Some of the facts revealed by the data presented in this report show that:

- Children in the 0-4 years age group comprise the largest group placed in either a FFA or FFH by a CWS agency, and are most often placed in a FFH;
- Most probation-supervised placements to FFAs/FFHs are of children 15-18 years of age, with over 60 percent of probation placements made to a FFA;
- African-American children were over-represented in these placements (28% in FFAs and 30% in FFHs) when compared to California's total African-American population of 7%;
- Male and female placements were about equal: 31,423 males and 33,173 females;
- For CWS-supervised children in both placement types, more children were 0-4 years old when they experienced their first placement, while most probation-supervised children in both placement types experienced their first placement between 15-18 years of age;
- Consistent with the total foster care population, the primary reason for removal of CWS-supervised children in either placement type was neglect. As expected, the primary reason for removal of probation-supervised children in either placement type was due to a law violation;
- CWS agencies made an approximately equal number of placements to FFAs and FFHs. Probation departments placed children more often with FFAs;
- The top three case plan/treatment goals for CWS-supervised children in both placement types were the same: return children home, long-term foster care with non-relative, and adoption. The predominant goal for probation-supervised children in both placement types was to return children home;
- 43% of CWS-supervised children in a FFH and 40% of CWS-supervised children in a FFA had been in their current placement more than 12 months. 42% of probation-supervised children in a FFH and 44% of probation-supervised children in a FFA had been in their current placement more than 12 months;
- Children who were placed out of their home county by CWS were more likely to be placed with a FFA, but CWS-supervised children placed in their home county were more likely to be placed in a FFH;
- Based on facility considerations, the most often selected reason for which a CWS agency or PD chose to place a child with a FFA or in a FFH was that no appropriate relative placement was available;
- When considering treatment issues, the most often selected reason for which a CWS agency or PD chose to place a child with a FFA or in a FFH was the availability of reunification services;
- The most often cited reason a CWS agency or PD chose a FFA over a FFH was the lack of availability of a (non-relative) FFH.

As mandated by the statutory language, CDSS reviewed the data and prepared recommendations for the second phase of the study. The recommendations described in this report address, among other things, county placement practices

and policy; licensure or certification and oversight of homes; services and supports provided to children and foster parents; the reason for and frequency of children placed by counties in these placement types; outcomes for children placed in FFAs and FFHs; and recruitment and training of foster parents.

Additional copies of this report can be obtained from:

California Department of Social Services
Foster Care Program Development Bureau
744 P Street, M.S. 19-71
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 324-5809

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	1
BACKGROUND	
Foster Family Agency	4
Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC)	8
Non-Relative Foster Family Homes	9
Specialized Care	10
Specialized Care and Incentives Assistance Program (SCIAP)	10
Clothing Allowance	10
CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN	
Child's Age by Placement Type	12
Ethnicity by Placement Type	14
Gender by Placement and Supervision Type	17
Age by Gender and Placement Type	18
Age at First Placement	20
Reason for Initial Removal	22
Months in Out-of-Home Placement	23
Supervising Agency by Placement Type	24
Child's Case Plan/Treatment Goal	26
Placement by Relationship Type	28
Prior Placements	29
Length of Stay in Current Placement	31
Out-of-County Placement	36
Children in Intensive Treatment Foster Care FFAs	38
COUNTY CHARACTERISTICS	
Placement Utilization by Age	41
Placement Utilization by Ethnicity	47
Placement Utilization by Gender	52
Out-of-County/Out-of-State Placements	57
County-Issued Foster Family Home Licenses	58
State-Issued Foster Family Home Licenses	61
COUNTY PLACEMENT PRACTICES	62
RECOMMENDATIONS	72
APPENDIX	76

TABLE OF FIGURES

	Page
Map 1: Number of Foster Family Agency Certified Homes (May 1999)	6
Map 2: Number of Foster Family Agency Certified Homes (December 1999)	7
Figure 1: Age by Supervision and Placement Type (bar graph)	12
Figure 2: Children in Placement by Age (pie chart)	13
Figure 3: Ethnicity by Placement Type	14
Figure 4: Ethnicity Percentages of All Children in Foster Care	15
Figure 5: Ethnicity Percentage Comparison: State, Foster Care, FFA and FFH	16
Figure 6: Gender by Placement and Supervision Type	17
Figure 7: Age by Gender and Placement Type (July 1, 1999)	18
Figure 8: Age by Gender and Placement Type (January 1, 2000)	19
Figure 9: Age at First Placement-All FFH and FFA Placements	20
Figure 10: Age at First Placement - CWS-Supervised Placements	20
Figure 11: Age at First Placement - Probation-Supervised Placements	21
Figure 12: Reason for Initial Removal by Placement Type	22
Figure 13: Months in Out-of-Home Placement by Placement Type	23
Figure 14: Supervising Agency by Placement Type: CWS-Supervised Placements	24
Figure 15: Supervising Agency by Placement Type: Probation-Supervised Placements	25
Figure 16: Child's Case Plan/Treatment Goal: CWS-Supervised Placements	26
Figure 17: Child's Case Plan/Treatment Goal: Probation-Supervised Placements	27
Figure 18: Placement by Relationship Type	28
Figure 19: Prior Placements-CWS Supervised Children	29
Figure 20: Prior Placements-Probation Supervised Children	30
Figure 21: Months in Current Placement by Age and Placement Type - CWS-Supervised Placements	31
Figure 22: Comparison of Length of Stay by Age	32
Figure 23: Months in Current Placement by Age and Placement Type - Probation-Supervised Placements	31

TABLE OF FIGURES (continued)

	Page
Figure 24: Length of Current Stay in Placement - CWS-Supervised - FFH	34
Figure 25: Length of Current Stay in Placement-CWS-Supervised - FFA	34
Figure 26: Length of Current Stay in Placement-Probation-Supervised - FFH	35
Figure 27: Length of Current Stay in Placement-Probation-Supervised - FFA	35
Figure 28: Placement Out of County by Placement Type (pie chart)	36
Figure 29: Out-of-County Placement by Placement Type (bar graph)	37
Figure 30: Outcomes for Children in ITFC Placement	40
Figure 31: County-Specific Placement Utilization by Age	44
Figure 32: Ethnicity Comparison	47
Figure 33: County-Specific Placement Utilization by Ethnicity	49
Figure 34: County-Specific Gender Data by Placement Type	53
Figure 35: County-Specific Gender Data	55
Figure 36: In- and Out-of-County Placement for Nine Counties	57
Figure 37: Out-of-State Placement Percentages for Nine Counties	57
Figure 38: Number of FFH Licenses and Licensed Capacity	58
Figure 39: Actual FFH Capacity and Percent of Licensed Capacity	60
Figure 40: State-Issued FFH Licenses	61
Figure 41: Number of FFA-CFHs and FFHs In County	63
Figure 42: Number of Children in FFA-CFHs and FFHs In County	64
Figure 43: Number of Children in FFA-CFHs and FFHs Out of County	64
Figure 44: Reason for Placement in FFA-CFH and FFH (Facility Issues)	65
Figure 45: Reason for Placement in FFA-CFH and FFH (Treatment Issues)	66
Figure 46: Placement Supervision	66/67
Figure 47: Frequency of Supervision Visits	67
Figure 48: Location of Supervision Visits	68
Figure 49: Frequency of Supervision Visits by FFA Social Workers	68
Figure 50: Location of Supervision Visits by FFA Social Workers	69

TABLE OF FIGURES (continued)

	Page
Figure 51: Prior Placement	69
Figure 52: Major Reason for Choosing FFA	70
Figure 53: County Licensure of FFH; Foster Parent Recruitment and Training	70/71